

***Hypochalcia ahenella* (D.& S.) (Lep.: Pyralidae) found again in Hertfordshire**

On the night of 18 June 1999, an unfamiliar pyrale appeared at one of my m.v. lamps, which Charles Watson and myself were operating on the tenth green of the golf course at Therfield Heath, near Royston in Hertfordshire. Closer examination revealed it to be a male *Hypochalcia ahenella*, which Heslop (1964. *Revised indexed check-list of the British Lepidoptera*) refers to as the Dingy Knot-horn.

According to the database maintained by Tony Davis, as Coordinator of the national Pyralid Recording Scheme, the only previous record for *H. ahenella* in Hertfordshire appears to be that made by the late Professor Colin Smith — "Royston, TL 3440, 20 July 1969". I am grateful to Tony for this information (and I will take this opportunity to remind readers to send him their pyralid records annually). The tenth green at Therfield lies in grid square TL 3339, and so is within a short distance of Smith's earlier record, which was clearly from the eastern half of Therfield Heath.

In spite of its name, Therfield Heath is, in fact, a chalk grassland site, where the Chalk Hill Blue butterfly *Lysandra coridon* (Poda) continues to thrive, and some 50 metres or so from the trap site is a very small former chalk quarry, where the vegetation is sparse and there are many loose chalk stones. Thus the known habitat of "... dry, stony ground with sparse vegetation: chalk downs, railway banks, quarries ..." given in Goater (1986. *British pyralid moths*. Harley Books) is not at all contradicted.

The moth-trapping carried out on Therfield Heath forms a part of an ecological assessment commissioned by the Conservators of Therfield Heath and Greens, to whom I am most grateful.— COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP.

Mercury Vapourers

Colin Plant's interesting note (*antea*: 198) raises various questions, on which one can but speculate. Perhaps it is sheer coincidence that this is the first year for a long time that I have had male Vapourers in my trap: 18 and 30 July 1999, but one only on each night (previous to that there had been one in the 1960s). On the other hand it does seem just possible that *Orgyia antiqua* is having a better season than usual in these relatively lean times, and if so, I suppose such an upturn might possibly affect a very large area in which much of France could be included(?). However, I have not yet seen males in diurnal flight this year; nor, for that matter, for a long time past, the Vapourer like so many insects having become far less frequent than formerly hereabouts. I will just mention the Buff Ermine *Spilosoma lutea* Hufn., which seems to have died out here; while the White Ermine *S. lubricipeda* L., though less common than formerly, is still to be found.— A. A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.